

A DISCUSSION ON THE CONCEPT OF ADVAITA (NON-DUALISM) IN THE LIGHT OF ŚĀNKARA VEDĀNTA AND KĀŚMĪRA ŚAIVISM

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Abstract: The author's purpose in the following pages is to discuss the Kāśmīra Śaivites' claim that it presents the perfect form of Advaitism. Right from Somānanda to Lakshmanjoo K Kāśmīrī Achāryas are of the opinion that the true advaita is an advaita of self-conscious Śiva or Brahman and not of differenceless indeterminate abstract Brahman. Ultimate reality is self-conscious Śiva, who is the only non-dual reality. If there is the only reality of Śiva, then whatever appears as the manifoldness can nothing be but Śiva himself. The world is the self-extension of Śiva, who manifests Himself in the form of this beautiful world. Kāśmīra Śaivites advocate that since the world of manifoldness is a manifestation of Śiva himself, it is true and not the false. Hence the doctrine is realism. On the other hand, as everything appears in the Śiva-consciousness, it is the sole reality, so the doctrine is Idealism. It is what K.C. Pandey calls Realistic Idealism and which he finds as the greatest contribution of Kāśmīra Śaivism. Similarly, scholars of this school claim that Śiva is the Absolute and the God simultaneously. It is Nirguṇa and Saguṇa, indeterminate and determinate, cosmic and acosmic, one and many simultaneously. How is such a contradiction possible? Kāśmīra Śaivites opine that the above contradictions appear due to our misunderstanding of the nature of Śiva-consciousness. On the other hand, Advaita Vedāntins are of the view that if there is only one non-dual reality of Brahman and there is nothing beside that, then whatever appears as the manifoldness is nothing but false. The world of manifoldness is nothing but appearance. Relations can be held only where two real terms are there. As there is only one real term that is Brahman, no relation can be ascribed to Brahman. Brahman is beyond all relations. Brahman is non-relational, and there is no "other," it could not be personal, nor could it be endowed with egoity. Brahman-Consciousness is pure consciousness devoid of egoity and duality. Brahman is acosmic, indeterminate, and nirguṇa. In fact, the whole debate is the debate between the personal and the impersonal- a debate between the Philosophers' Absolute and the theists' God. We are already familiar with such debates between Advaitins and Vaiṣṇavas. This time this is between the Advaitins and the Kāśmīra Śaivas.

Advaita Vedānta is considered to be one of the leading philosophies of India. Supporters of Advaita believe that it is here that the culmination of Indian thought takes place. These people believe that Śāṅkara is the greatest of all the philosophers and Advaita is the climax of thought. This idea of the supremacy of Advaita Vedānta was popularised by the first systematic Historiographer of Indian Philosophy,

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Madhavacarya, in his *Sarvadarsanasamgraha*. He presents different schools of Indian philosophy in a progressive order and posits Advaita at the end, signifying that Indian philosophizing finds its climax in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. This supremacy of Advaita continued to be entertained by the intellectuals and the masses of India. Śaṅkara's Advaita became synonymous with the Vedānta, and Vedānta in its Advaitic version became the official church of India. Nineteenth-century is regarded as the century of Vedānta. Due to the efforts of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Dayananda, and Vivekananda, Vedānta spread not only in India but abroad as well, and soon it became popular amongst the Westerners also and came to be reckoned as the representative philosophy of India.

However, in the twentieth century, this supremacy of the Vedānta and especially of Advaita Vedānta was challenged by scholars of Kāśmīra Śaivism. Right from Gopinath Kaviraja, K.C. Pandey to L.N. Sharma and Kamalakar Mishra, the Saiva scholars were of the view that Indian thought finds its culmination in the Kāśmīra Śaivism. These scholars are of the opinion that the Kāśmīra Saivite form of Advaita is a more comprehensive, inclusive, and cogent form of Advaita in comparison to the Vedantic Advaita of Śaṅkaracārya. These scholars further maintain that the Pūrṇādvaita of Abhinavagupta provides a better worldview than that propagated by the Kevalādvaita of Śaṅkara. Our purpose in the following pages is to assess the above claim of Kāśmīra Śaivism.

Prof. Kamalakar Mishra, in his writings and speeches, has advanced mainly three arguments to prove why Abhinavagupta is the greatest of all philosophers and why Kāśmīra Śaivism should be preferred over the Advaita Vedānta.¹ Mishra is of the view that Advaitins fail to understand the true nature of consciousness. Consciousness is not only of the nature of knowledge (jñāna) but also of the nature of the activity (kriyā). Advaitins overlook this activity aspect of consciousness. Śaṅkara's Brahman is only static and passive, while Śaivites' Śiva is free and dynamic. By highlighting the kriyā aspect of consciousness, Kāśmīra Śaivism could solve the riddle of creation without taking recourse to Māyā. The world is not the creation of Māyā or fictitious. It is real as it is a self-projection of Śiva himself. The other argument of Prof. Mishra is that while Śaṅkara's Absolute lacks self-consciousness as Brahman -consciousness in its true nature lacks Vimarśa. In contrast, Śaivites' Śiva-consciousness is not abstract or pure but endowed with self-consciousness. Kāśmīris could arrive at the truth of consciousness that it is no better than sheer darkness if it lacks self-consciousness. We cannot imagine that the supreme divine reality lacks self-consciousness. So the theistic model of Kāśmīra Śaivism provides a better understanding of consciousness than that provided by the Absolutists like Śaṅkara. Mainly due to the above two reasons, Prof. Mishra's world-view of Śaivites is positive and life-asserting. At the same time, Śaṅkara's approach to life and its problems is highly negative. Kāśmīris talk about Bhoga and Moksa together. In fact, life is the

¹ See Mishra Kamalakar, *Kāśmīra Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1999.

synthesis of the two. Both these aspects are to be fulfilled. Tantra is basically the art of this. So Kāśmīra Śaivites would claim that they provide a holistic view of life, whereas Śaṅkara's philosophy negates the practical needs of life and emphasizes too much renunciation. Mishra calls for a more engaged form of life and opines that pursuing material goals of life does not deprive us of spiritual orientation. Material gains and spirituality can go together. There is no contradiction in it.

The author's view is that all the above three arguments from the side of Abhinavagupta are not justified. Advaitic view of consciousness is more mature than that of Śivadvaita. Mishra often misrepresents Abhinavagupta in his over-enthusiasm against Śaṅkara. Śaivites' doctrine of Ābhāsavāda does not give more space to the worldly life in comparison with Māyāvada. Ābhāsavāda is through and through an ideological position. Ironically, Kāśmīra Śaivism, on the one hand, proclaims the doctrine of Ābhāsavāda and, on the other hand, denounces Śaṅkara for negating the reality of the world. Moreover lastly, a philosophy of life that stresses Kama and Artha is doomed to failure, frustration, dissatisfaction, and unrest. It deprives us of our spiritual mooring as well.

In fact, the defect does not lie in Kāśmīra Śaivism. Kāśmīra Śaivism is really a form of Advaita itself. However, the Kashmiri version of Advaita is slightly different from the Advaita prevalent in other parts of the country. Mishra and other modern scholars of Kāśmīra Śaivism unnecessarily present Advaita as Purvapaksa of Śivadvaita. Advaita is the final teaching of Kāśmīra Saiva Darsana. That is why LaksmanaJoo maintains that one who has no grounding of Advaita cannot understand the spirit of Kāśmīra Śaivism.² The real significance of Kāśmīra Śaivism is that it leads us to the path of Advaita.

² LaksmanaJoo has brought out five focal points on which Advaita and Kāśmīra Śaivism differs. The foremost difference between these two systems is that they have their different understanding of Karmayoga. In Advaita Vedānta Karmayoga means niṣkāmakarmayoga, i.e., performing action without asking for the reward. On the other hand, for Kāśmīra Śaivism Karmayoga means Pure Yoga itself, i.e., contemplating on Śiva (God) even at the time of performing action. Contemplating Śiva doing all action is Yoga-in-action according to Kāśmīra Śaivism. Kāśmīra Śaivaacāryas are of the opinion that according to the Vedāntins an individual being is the reflection of Universal Being (Brahman) in the intellect. But here Kāśmīra Achāryas point out that since between the individual being and Universal Being it is the latter which is purer and more refined so it is in Universal Being or Brahman that reflection should take place. The other difficulty would be that when the world itself has not been created, how there would be the existence of intellect (buddhi) where reflection would take place. Therefore, Kāśmīra Śaivism is of the view that it is in the Śiva consciousness that this world with all its beings is reflected by his swatantrya-Śakti. Another difference which LaksmanaJoo notes between Vedānta and Kāśmīra Śaivism is that while Vedānta does not accept the major role of Kundalini Yoga in its sādhanā on the other hand in Kāśmīra Śaivism Kundalini Yoga has very significant role in psādhanā. The other major differences which he finds between Advaita Vedānta and Kāśmīra Śaivism is that while the teaching of Vedānta is restricted mainly to qualified Brahmans and specially to Sanyāsins, the door of study and practice of Kāśmīra Śaivism is open for all, men or women without any restriction of caste, colour and creed. We know that women and Śudras were not allowed to practice the Vedānta. In fact, this is the major difference of Āgamic tradition with the orthodox Vedic tradition. Where the Vedas were

In fact, ontologically, the position of Ābhāsavāda is not different from the Māyāvāda of Vedāntins. Even Kamalakar Mishra had to concede that “Māyāvāda and Līlavāda are ontologically not different.” (Mishra. 1999, 212).

He says, “as far as the ontological status of the world is concerned, the world is false or appearance, according to Līlavāda as well as Māyāvāda, for creation cannot be played (līlā) unless it is false.” (Ibid, 212). Mishra concludes that appearance (ābhāsa) is thus ontologically false as it is just appearance and not reality, but axiologically real.

Again and again, Kāśmīra Śaivites assert that the Advaitins regard appearance (ābhāsa) as tuccha or asat. However, even a beginner in Advaita Vedānta would deny that this is the case with the Advaitins, for they never regard the world asat. No one can deny the fact of experience and hence the world’s appearance, Advaitins would like to reassert. What appears could not be unreal (asat or tuccha); it is the doctrine of the Advaitins. That is why they accept three levels of reality and give the appearance a status of “pratibhāsikasattā.” Kāśmīra Śaivites unnecessarily club Advaitins with Mādhyamikas and similarly conceive Māyāvāda and Śūnyavāda. They fail to distinguish the difference between the doctrines of Māyāvāda and Śūnyavāda. For the Śūnyavādins, the world is asat or tuccha, whereas, for the Advaitins, the world could not be tuccha as it does appear. So, the charge that Advaitins regard the appearance as tuccha is wrong.

The major flaw with Kāśmīra Śaivism is that it does not accept the doctrine of levels of truth. The ultimate truth, according to it, is the Supreme Śiva Consciousness. Now it is ultimately only on this level that the world is appearance. Only at the level of paramārtha can we say that the world is ābhāsa. It is true with both the Kāśmīra Śaivites as well as with the Advaitins. As far as the level of Vyavahāra is concerned, Śaivites and the Advaitins both would accept its phenomenal reality. So, the charge that Advaitins reject the world as tuccha is not justified. In fact, it is with the Kāśmīra Śaivism that the problem arises. The position of Kāśmīra Śivism could be justified only if it accepts the theory of two truths. Otherwise, a philosophy that believes in idealism (ābhāsvāda) cannot maintain the truth of the material world. On the one hand, Kāśmīra Śaivism maintains that the world is ideal, it is very much like a dream happening in Śiva’s mind, and on the other hand, it defends the objective reality of the universe. However, how could it be possible? Either the world is true or is false. Idealism and realism cannot be true together. We can resolve this dichotomy only after accepting levels of truth. What is at the level of samvritti truth may be false at the level of paramārtha. Unfortunately, scholars of Kāśmīra Śaivism are hesitant to

meant only for the caste Hindus, the Āgamas were for all. Like other Kāśmīra Śaiva scholars LakshmanJoo also believes that where this world is untrue or unreal for Vedāntins, for Kāśmīra Śaivaacāryas the world is real. LakshmanJoo says that for the Vedāntins the world does not exist. It is illusory. On the other hand, for Kāśmīra Śaivaacāryas the world is as real as Lord Śiva, for this world is creation of Śiva himself. If Śiva is real how his creation could be unreal? Swami Lakshman Joo, *Kashmir Shaivism: The Secret Supreme, Kashmir Shaivism: The Secret Supreme*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1991, pp103-108.

accept this doctrine of levels of truth. They do not want to subscribe to the theory of Vyavahāra and paramārtha. Advaitins and Mādhyamikas accept this, so they can better explain the riddle of the universe. They can hold the theory that what is true in Vyavahāra is ultimately false. The only alternative left to Śaivites is that they should openly accept that this world is a real creation of Śiva. Nevertheless, if this position is accepted, then there would be no difference between śaiva siddhānta and Kāśmīra Śaivism. Kāśmīra Śaivites' position would be theistic. We do find a number of places where Kāśmīra Śaivaachāryas are maintaining this position. When Kāśmīra Śaivaacāryas proclaim that the world is a real creation of God, that Śiva is omnipotent, omnipresent self-conscious reality, and that Śiva has panca-kryas to perform, they construe Śiva in the fashion of a personal God. What is wrong with the theistic Vedāntins is also with Kāśmīra Śaivaacāryas. Kamalakar Mishra complains that Advaita Vedānta succumbs to the dichotomy of Isvara and Brahman. However, the author would like to maintain that this is the case with Kāśmīra Śaivaachāryas themselves. Śiva is either a philosophical Absolute or Theistic God. God (Śiva) is either saguṇa or Nirguṇa.

Similarly, the world is either true or false. It cannot be both. Kāśmīra Śaivites want to take both these positions. Hence, we have a number of contradictions. K.C.Pandey talks about Realistic Idealism⁵, and Mishra talks of theistic Absolutism. In fact, theism and Absolutism, Ābhāsavāda and Swātantryavāda, cannot go together how Idealism and Realism can be both true. As the author has said earlier, all these contradictions could be resolved if the doctrine of levels of truth is incorporated. However, the majority of Kāśmīra Śaivaachāryas, including Abhinavagupta, is reluctant to do so. The author thinks that the spirit of Kāśmīra Śaivism would be better apprehended only keeping with this division in view.

Prof. Sangam Lal Pandey has also addressed this issue of supremacy in his book on Indian Philosophy. Pandey there referred to Gopinath Kaviraja and refuted his view that Kāśmīra Śaivism is better and superior to Advaita Vedānta. Pandey argues that Kashmir śaivates' position that knowledge and activity always go together and that the Self (Śiva) is always endowed with both; these two cannot be accepted. It could be true in the empirical realm where knowing and willing are presented in the intermingled form. However, only knowledge persists at the level of Pure form or transcendent (Śiva). That is why even Kāśmīra Śaivism has to accept that Śiva is of the nature of Prakāśa and Śakti is of the nature of Kriyā. Even in the realm of the empirical, Pandey says that the fact of epistemology suggests in so many ways that knowing and willing are not necessarily copresent. Pandey believes that the same Reality (Śiva) is the subject matter of both the Advaita and the Trik philosophy. However, where Advaita studies its pure and transcendent form when Śiva is not endowed with Vimarśa, Trik philosophy commences its inquiry with the endowment of Śiva with Vimarśa. It primarily focuses on Śiva endowed with Śakti or Vimarśa. Trik's position cannot be called true Advaita because it talks of the sāmarasya of Śiva and Śakti. Indeed, it is not dualism, but that also does not mean that it is pure advaita. Pandey says that there is swagatabheda persisting in Reality; therefore, Kāśmīra śaiva's position is near to theistic Vedānta than to Śaṅkara's Advaita. (Sangam. 2002, 360-361)

One of the most serious attempts to establish Kāśhmīra Śaivism as the most consistent form of Absolutism has been made by L. N. Sharma in his book on Kāśhmīra Śaivism (Sharma. 2006). L.N.Sharma was the teacher of Śaivism at B.H.U. Later on, his tradition was continued and carried away by his successors Kamalakar Mishra and K. P. Mishra. Influenced by his teachers and predecessors, T. R. V. Murti and R. K. Tripathi Sharma took the task of unfolding the knots of various varieties of Absolutism or Advaitism. It was L.N. Sharma who not only gave for the first time a comparative account of Vedantic and śaiva Absolutism but also took pains to understand the unique features of different types of Absolutisms. Taking insights from Murti Sharma is of the view that ever since the Sāṃkhya philosophy split the Real into *being* and *becoming*, Self and not-self, *Ātmā* and *Anātmā*, Puruṣa and Prakṛti, the agenda of subsequent thought was set. Post-Sāṃkhya philosophy had a major task how to cope with this Sāṃkhyan dualism of *Ātmā* and *Anātmā*. Hence we find two types of philosophies- the philosophy of *Ātmavādin* and *Anātmavādin*. Unable to reconcile the dichotomy and duality, subsequent philosophies favored and emphasized one of the pair and ignored the other. Few were talking about the *being*; others opted for *becoming*. Sharma observes that in their attempt to reconcile the intricacies of dichotomies and dualities, *Ātmavādin* and *Anātmavādin* succumbed to comparatively a more (profound, deeper, and dangerous) irreconcilable sort of dualism of Noumenon and Phenomenon. Sharma finds in Śaṅkara's Advaita and Mādhyaṃika philosophy a robust variety of dualism which is more dualistic than that of old Sāṃkhya. It was this sort of dichotomies and dualities that Kāśhmīra Śaivism challenges. śaiva Absolutism is the perfect Absolutism where nothing is overlooked and excluded. It reconciles not only the dichotomies of Sāṃkhya but also solves the issue of Samvṛti and Paramārtha, Vyāvahārika and Pāramāthika. Sharma observes, "if the gulf between the phenomena and the noumena, Puruṣa and Prakṛiti is to be bridged, then the two must be regarded as constituting the two inseparable aspects of the absolute. All other absolutisms failed mostly because of their narrow visions in which the absolute was identified with one of the dualities." (Sharma. 2006, 179).

Referring to Sri Aurobindo, Sharma points out that both the negations, the negation of *Ātmavādin* and that of the *Anātmavādin* finally lead to (*śūnyatā*) are one-sided views of reality. The highest reality represents the truth of both aspects. Change and permanence, becoming and being, are both real. The reality is the equilibrium of both these aspects. It is Śiva-Śakti sāmānyasya. If we accept only one of the dualities as real and reject the other as illusory, in the end, the other also, which we accept as real, would be reduced to nothing. (Sharma. 2006, 170). The real monism or the true Advaita admits all things as the one Brahman. It does not seek to bisect its existence into two incompatible entities, eternal truth, and eternal falsehood, Brahman and non-Brahman, Self and not-self. The self and not-self are inseparable aspects of the same Absolute conceived in two ways only through abstraction. Being and Becoming both form the reality. If we accept being and becoming as separate and approach the absolute in terms of only one of them, we would finally face the fate of (*Sūnyavāda*) nihilism. It is not only true with the *Anātmavāda* but is true with the *Ātmavāda* also, the Śaivites reiterate.

Śaivites reject the Vedantic theory that the ultimate reality is of Pure Being. No doubt, the theory of Pure being is an advance to the theory of Nihilism. However, a Pure Being that excludes and negates all becoming cannot be regarded as the ultimate reality. In fact, being and becoming, change and permanence, substance and modes both are real. The being approach of Vedānta is as much defective and one-sided as the becoming approach of Buddhism. Like the inactive Puruṣa in the Sāṃkhya or the Śūnya in the Mādhyaṃika, the Brahman in the Vedānta is also devoid of freedom. Brahman has been described as Sachchidānanda –being, consciousness, and bliss, yet being devoid of freedom becomes like a material thing. What constitutes the chief characteristics of the consciousness as opposed to the inconscientious is its power of freedom concerning manifestation. “Prakāśa (light) would in no way differ from the inert crystal, if it did not possess the capacity to reflect the objects according to its will.” (Sharma. 2006, 172). If consciousness were devoid of freedom, it would be as good as nothing. Presenting the arguments further, Sharma writes that even our experience does not support the thesis of Pure Consciousness, for it is never known in experience. What is presented by our consciousness is not pure consciousness but qualified consciousness. Thus, we see that against the Vedantic theory of Pure Being and Pure Consciousness, Śaivites present their theory of Free Being and Free Consciousness. Freedom is the essential characteristic of Śiva-consciousness. Because of freedom, Śiva is Maheshwara. He is not only impersonal but personal as well, for the Absolute here is a free being; swātantrya is the chief characteristic of the Absolute according to Kāśmīra Śaivism. It is in this respect that Parama Śiva differs from Brahman-svatantrasābdobrahman vāda vailakṣyanyamaachakṣāṇaḥ chitomāheśvarya-saratā brūte. (Sharma. 2006, 178). Samvit is Vimarśaśūnya in Advaita while Vimarśa is the essence of parāsamvit in Kāśmīra Śaivism. Vimarśa is the power of self-consciousness, self-manifestation, and freedom-freedom to manifest and self-manifest, to conceal and to realize. Against Advaita Vedānta, here in Parama Śiva, there is no separation of cognition and freedom, bodha and swatantrya. It is sāmaraśya of consciousness and freedom, being and becoming, Śiva and Śakti.

Freedom is the very nature of the light of consciousness. For, in the absence of freedom consciousness would not be different from material objects like crystal, mirror etc. The essential nature of luminosity, as opposed to materiality, consists in having freedom in respect of manifestations. This freedom is natural to the self-luminous consciousness (Prakāśa) and is known as absolute independence. (Sharma. 2006, 179).

Sharma concludes that the essential characteristic of the śaiva Absolute is “the free act of consciousness.”

The ultimate reality in Kāśmīra Śaivism is described as “Prakāśa-Vimarśa.” Prakāśa stands for the pure, changeless, witness aspect of the consciousness, whereas the Vimarśa stands for “the power which gives rise to self-consciousness, will, knowledge and action, successively.” Prakāśa is the jñāna (an aspect of consciousness), and Vimarśa is kriyā; one is bare consciousness, and another is the power of self-consciousness. Prakāśa is the pure mirror, and Vimarśa signifies its

reflective power. It represents the capacity of the Subject to know himself in the state of perfect freedom from all affections. It is the power of self-consciousness or absolute egoity (pūrṇa ahaṅkāra) of the maheshvara (lord) and is called “aham vimarśa,” “āmarśa” or “pratyāmarśa.” Prakāśa and Vimarśa are always united together. One without another is never found. If Prakāśa is devoid of Vimarśa, it will cease to be self-luminous and become jada. In that case, it would be no different from material objects like a mirror, crystal, etc. Vimarśa is the key principle of Kāśmīra Śaivism. “Vimarśa is the throb, the original ‘bimba’ of the Absolute I holding within itself and experiencing as one with itself, the entire universe. It is the power of the highest lord which always shines as unlimited self-consciousness and never as limited object.” (Sharma. 2006, 179).³

Owing to its nature as Vimarśa, the ultimate reality in Kāśmīra Śaivism is a self-conscious Absolute. It is not an abstract, non-differentiated, indeterminate pure consciousness. Absolute consciousness is the Absolute I or Universal I. Kāśmīris call it Absolute Egoity –Parama ahaṅkāra. A consciousness that is not self-illuminated is just like matter. It cannot remain unknown even for a single moment. Consciousness is always self-consciousness. This self-conscious reality is the only reality. How can we imagine that God has no consciousness of his own? Advaitins fail to understand the nature of the Absolute. The absolute is indeterminate and transcendent; it is true. It is beyond our thoughts and imagination; it is also true. It is also true that reality is one and only one reality, and besides, that nothing exists. However, it does not mean that the Absolute has no consciousness. It will be very much like dark inertness if we hold this. Absolute is the Absolute “I” say Kāśmīris. This “I” includes in itself whatever else there is. It is the total of reality and more than that. It is perfect and infinite. This Absolute Subject is the only reality according to Kāśmīra Śaivites. The so-called object is the only intermediary stage. Whatever objects are there, they are from that “I” and ultimately dissolve into that. Advaitins believe that if there is only one, how can it think of itself as I. If there is no “other,” then there is no justification for “self,” “Self,” and “other” both these binaries are transcended into Absolute. To this Kāśmīris replies that if the Absolute were only of the nature of pure existence, then it could be assumed that there is no self-awareness in the Ultimate. However, since it is of the nature of consciousness and bliss, also we have to accept that reality is a self-conscious reality otherwise, we cannot explain its cit and Amānda aspects. Without assuming God as self-conscious and endowed with “I,” we cannot explain its nature as consciousness and bliss. It does not mean that the egoity of the Śiva is similar to that of the Jiva. The egoity of Śiva is absolutely different from the egoity of Jiva. We must distinguish between ‘the empirical ego’ and “the transcendental ego,” “the pure ego,” and the “impure ego.” Śiva is the transcendental and pure ego. There is nothing more than this, and as everything is its own ideation, it is Universal Ego or Absolute Ego.

³ Sharma L.N., p.183. Ultimate reality is not only consciousness but a consciousness that also reflects itself. Unlike the Prakāśa in the mirror, it surveys itself. It is a non-relational immediate awareness of itself. It reflects itself as Cidrūpin Śakti. This reflecting itself is Vimarśa.

As the Absolute, according to śaivas, is self-consciousness, the Absolute is a personal one. Against the Advaitic view of the impersonal Absolute, the Kāśmīra Śaivism presents the theory of the Personal Absolute. Absolute is the personal God. Its position is like theistic religions like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism or Vaiṣṇavism. Owing to its theistic inclination Kāśmīra Śaivism better explains the aesthetical and moral, the religious, and spiritual expectations and aspirations of people.⁴ Absolute is here the God whom people worship. Followers of Kāśmīra Śaivism claim on the authority of several texts that this Personal Absolute is impersonal and indeterminate as well. However, they may ask whether that indeterminate, impersonal, transcendent Absolute is endowed with Egoity even in that stage. Kāśmīra Śaivism will answer affirmatively, and this is the reason why Advaitins would argue that it is only they who believe the Real as Nirguṇa and indeterminate in the true sense. What to say of Parādvaita, Kāśmīra Śaivites' position is not even of Advaita.

As we saw, the Kāśmīra Śaivites accept only one reality that is of Śiva-consciousness. The world of manifoldness is not outside Śiva; it is within Śiva – Śiva is immanent and transcendent. He is all-pervasive. He pervades the world and also more of that. In order to explain how the one reality is manifested into this world of

⁴ Sharma distinguishes between the two approaches with which the two philosophies, Kāśmīra Śaivism and Advaita Vedānta, approach the reality. Where the Kāśmīra Śaiva approach is the *purnatva* approach, the Vedantic approach has been called by him the Kaivalya approach. One is the path of Ananda, the other is of Jñāna, the Vama, and the other is the Dakṣina. One is the Agamic approach, and the other is the Vedic one. Though both these systems talk about freedom and perfection, what they understand by these terms are quite different. Sharma complains that the Vedantic approach is a negative one. Perfection or purnatva here is the purity of Being, i.e., freedom from all becoming. On the other hand in Kāśmīra Śaivism Śiva is all perfect, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent. The world is his real manifestation as Māyā is not real in Vedānta. Vedantic Absolutism is exclusive; it is based on elimination and renunciation. Talking about the essential difference between the two approaches, Sharma observes three major dualities on which the whole edifice of Vedānta is built. They are the separation between real and the unreal, knowledge and ignorance, and the Bhoga and Yoga. The distinction between what is real and what is illusory, knowledge, and ignorance is the basic presupposition of Vedānta. The first requirement of the seeker after truth is the discriminatory knowledge of real and unreal, the eternal and the false. On the other hand, in Kāśmīra Śaivism, nothing is unreal; even “the unreal is real” for them. Whatever enters into consciousness is a manifestation of the self; we cannot deny it; Abhinavagupta, again and again, reiterates this. Similarly, much has been said regarding the opposition between knowledge and ignorance. However, Śaivites think that ignorance is knowledge self-concealed. It is nothing but a self-limitation or self-concentration of consciousness. If everything is a manifestation of the same Śiva-consciousness, then the moral implication would be that nothing should be regarded as impure, ignominious. There is nothing in the universe that is to be discarded by seekers as everything is divine. This again suggests why the śaiva Absolutism is inclusive and all-embracing compared to the Vedantic Absolutism, which is exclusive and eliminative, Sharma observes. Sharma has discussed in length this issue. It is his major contribution to the understanding of Indian thought in general and of Kāśmīra Śaivism in particular. See part-1 of his book. pp.1-25.

manifoldness, it is necessary to understand their theory of creation. According to Śaivites, everything is the creation of Śiva; this creation is actually his self-extension. Śiva expresses himself in the form of this world. Śaivites accept thirty-six principles (tattvas) to explain this creation theory. They believe that the whole reality is a play of these 36 principles. Let us begin one by one. The first one is the earth (prithivī). No one can deny the existence of this. The second one is water (apa). The third one is the fire (teja). Fourth is the air (vāta); these are the famous four gross elements. There are the perceivable elements. Fifth is the ether (ākāśa). All these together form the famous panca-mahābhūta. They are the constituents of this physical world. The whole world is actually playing of this.

The question is how these five gross elements are created. Moreover, here comes the theory of evolution. The five elements were not created at once in one stroke. The five gross elements evolved out of five subtle elements (tanmātra). Five subtle elements are Sound (śabda), touch (sparśa), color (rūpa), taste (svāda), and odour (gandha). These are the subtle essences that evolved five gross elements: ether, air, fire, water, and earth. The credit goes to the Sāṃkhya philosophy for postulating such subtle elements behind the gross ones for the first time. Śaivites accept this Sāṃkhyan doctrine and readjust it in their idealistic metaphysics. Subtle elements are very crucial to any Yogic science. One can say that the edifice of Yoga and Tantra is based on the postulation of these subtle elements. Now the question is how the subtle elements evolved. We find the same Sāṃkhyan answer. Nevertheless, the answer seems more rational here.⁵ Subtle elements evolved out of the principle of Egoity (*Ahaṃkāra*). When *Ahaṃkāra* is dominated by *tamas*, subtle elements are evolved. Five sense-organs (jnānendriyas), five motor organs (karmendriyas), and the five subtle elements (tanmātras) all these are evolved out of the principle of Egoity (*Ahaṃkāra*). Sense-organs are evolved when the *Ahaṃkāra* is dominated by *sattva*; motor organs are evolved when the *Ahaṃkāra* is predominant with the *rajas*, and the five subtle elements evolve when the *tamas* dominate the *Ahaṃkāra*. Five sense organs are the ghrāṇendriya (the sense organ for smell), the rasanā (the sense organ for taste), the cakṣu (the sense organ for sight), the tvak (the sense organ for touch), the srotra (the sense organ for hearing). Five motor organs are the organ of speech (vāk), the organ of grasping (pāṇi), the organ of locomotion (pāda), the organ of excretion (pāyu), and the organ of reproduction (upastha). These organs are the organs of action. Apart from the above group of the fifteens (five sense organs, five motor organs, and the five subtle elements) mind (manas) is also produced from the principle of Egoity. Furthermore, in how the principle of Egoity (*ahaṃkāra*) is created, we find the same Sāṃkhyan answer. The principle of the intellect (buddhi) is that it originated. Like the Sāṃkhya Kāśmīra Śaivites also believe in the psychical

⁵ Bhogāyatana, Bhogya-jagat, and Bhogendriyas are the products of *Ahaṃkāra*; this theory fits well only in an idealistic worldview. If we keep this in mind, then a reinterpretation of the sāṃkhya theory is needed. The problem related to the number of prakṛti, too, can be resolved in the Tantric – Yogic Idealistic model. There are as many prakṛtis as many Puruṣas are. It is the Tantric position. Prakṛti is not one parallel to each and every Puruṣa; there is a prakṛti – taccapratipumniyatatvātanekam.

triad of the intellect, Egoity, and the mind. These are known as the famous internal organs. Keeping in tune with the general Indian trends Śaiva Advaitins believes that the *psychical* lies in the realm of the matter as the triad is finally the product of the unconscious, material Prakṛti which is the root cause of all the categories mentioned so far.

We can recapitulate our account of the creation so far in reverse order. From Prakṛti is originated the principle of the Intellect and from that the principle of Egoity and from the principle of the Egoity, the group of the sixteen (the five sense organs, five motor organs, five subtle elements, and the mind), and lastly from the subtle elements five gross elements. Thus, including Prakṛti, we have twenty-four principles (tattvas)-Prakṛti and its 23 evolutes. All these forms the objective world, the object of our experience. The twenty-fifth principle is the Puruṣa - the subject – the self. The story so far has been like that of Sāṃkhya with minor revisions. The basic philosophy of Sāṃkhya is dualistic. It believes in two ultimate reals – subject and object, self and non-self, the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti. Kāśmīra Śaivites are not agreed with this dualistic worldview. They are, in this sense, monist and of the opinion that the same reality of consciousness pervades in both of these. The subject and the object, the Puruṣa, and the Prakṛti, are both self-extension and manifest the same reality. This reality is the reality of pure consciousness which Kāśmīra Śaivism calls the Śiva. The nature of Śiva is that it is essentially dynamic. Consciousness is a consciousness force. Śakti is the nature of Śiva. Now how does the ultimate reality of pure consciousness (parā Saṃvit) or Śiva express itself in the form of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, and how the pure consciousness is diversified into innumerable centers of subjective consciousness (puruṣa). The parallel objective consciousness (Prakṛti) Śaivites have their own story regarding that. They postulate (Sharma. 2006, 178) more principles in order to explain this process. Hence, we have 36 principles in total.

One thing must be said here regarding the distinction between the Sāṃkhyan Puruṣa and the Śaivites' Puruṣa. Sāṃkhyan Puruṣa is a transcendental reality. It is of the nature of pure witness consciousness, essentially free, eternal, and unbound. On the other hand, Puruṣa in the Kāśmīra Śaivism is the individual soul. Only when the Universal Spirit is bound with limited potency, limited knowledge, particularity, spatial finitude or rules of causality and time it is called Puruṣa.

The question is if the Śiva or the Universal Spirit is omnipotent, omniscient, perfect or complete, infinite and eternal, how does it become bound with limited potency, limited knowledge, particularities, finitude, and temporality. The answer is due to the obscuration caused by Māyā. Māyā is the power of obscuration. Māyā obscures the perfection of Śiva and creates five principles of limitations – limited potency (kaḷā), limited knowledge (vidyā), attachment to particularities (rāga), spatio-causal limitation (niyati), and time and temporality (kāla). These are known in the system as five sheaths (pañcakancuka). Enveloped in these five sheaths, Śiva is called Puruṣa. Universal Śiva consciousness or para saṃvit (anubhava) through Māyā and the five principles of obscuration – diversifies itself into limited centers of consciousness or experience (puruṣa) and, of course, in the form of experienced (Prakṛti).

From the above exposition/analysis, we have deduced six more categories – Māyā and the five principles of obscuration. Six categories are – kaḷā, vidyā, rāga, niyatī, kāla and the Māyā. If we add these six to the previous 25 principles, we have 31 principles. We can also note that the Māyā is the point from which the realm of limitations, imperfections, and impurities starts with. That is why the realm comprising these 31 principles is known as the impure realm. Creation goes in an impure way – this is the famous aśuddha adhvā. The way of Māyā (Māyā adhvā) is the impure way (aśuddha adhvā).

The crucial point in the Kāśmīra Śaivism is how the principle of Māyā is introduced in the system. Māyā plays on the features and powers of the Śiva. We have seen how Māyā obscures the omnipotence, omniscience, perfectness, infinitude, and eternity. Māyā is the power of concealment. However, the question is whether it conceals what.

Actually, Māyā is not introduced here abruptly as in the Advaitins or in the other Vedāntins. Māyā here is the Śiva's own power of concealment. However, if there is the power of concealment, then there should be the power of self-manifestation as well. These self-revelatory powers also need categorization. Furthermore, there should be order even there. Five categories are accepted in order to explain the self-manifestation of the Śiva. These are famous as the pure way of creation - the Śuddha adhvā. They are śuddhavidyā, Īśvara, Sadāśiva, Śakti, and then lastly, the Śiva. Śiva manifests himself in order. First is the Śiva - the Ultimate Reality, the pure consciousness. Second is the Śakti, the power which makes the real self-revelatory, Perfect and endows it with the power of self-consciousness. The third is Sadāśiva. The fourth is the Īśvara, and the fifth is the śuddhavidyā. The last three are endowed with the power of desire (ichchhāśakti), the power of knowledge (jñānaśakti), and the power of action respectively (kriyāśakti). The first two are endowed with the power of consciousness (citśakti) and power of bliss (ānandaśakti), respectively. We can understand in another way that Śiva reveals himself into this world gradually. Before the manifestation of the Ultimate into the world of manifoldness and impurity, there is a manifestation that is transcendental, pure, and divine. The five categories of the Śuddha adhvā belong to that. Thus, we have in total 36 principles or tattvas in Kāśmīra Śaivism.

Though the Kāśmīra Śaivites distinguish between the Way Pure and the Way Impure, and though they make a distinction between the realm of Māyā and the realm of Śiva, they fail to draw further logical implications of their own doctrine of the two realms. They fail to understand that the theory of the two realms is actually the theory of the two levels of reality. The realm of Māyā is the realm of the phenomena (vyavahāra), and the *Way Pure* is the realm of the noumena (paramārtha). Both the realms are not of the same level. Hence any doctrines advocating a continuity between these two levels fail to preserve the non-dual nature of the Reality – be it the Parināmavāda or Śrīṣṭivāda, Līlāvāda or Svātantryavāda. By admitting a function of the creative process, even in the realm of the Pure Way, Śaivites failed to comprehend the true nature of the ultimate. The so-called Pure proves equal to its impure counterparts. Śiva cannot be part and parcel of the creative process. Speaking it is

beyond all relations, all categories. No causal relations can be applicable to it. Its very nature is a cosmic one.⁶

In the vast literature of Advaita Vedānta, we find a number of texts presenting a detailed account of the creative process. Most of the time, it is very similar to what we find in Sankhya or Śaivism. It is also true that at the beginning of the Brahmasūtra, it is stated that Brahman is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of this world. In the second aphorism of the *Brahmasūtra*. Bādarāyaṇa says, “all the creations, etc. are from him---janmādyasayataḥ” Even before *Brahmasūtra*, we find that the Upaniṣads are unanimously proclaiming that Brahman is the creator of this world. After analyzing the different theories put to explain the origin of the universe, viz. Kālavāda, Śvabhāvavāda, Niyativāda, and Yadṛcchhāvāda, the sages of the Upaniṣads finally accept an omniscient, omnipotent God as the creator of this universe. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says,

Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti, yat prayantya bhisaṁviśanti
tadbrahman. -*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.1.

Thus, in the Vedāntic literature, Brahman has been accepted as the cause of this world's creation, sustentation, and destruction. Apart from this, we find a systematic account of the cosmogony in the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣadic seers have given various accounts of the process of creation. The most famous of them is the doctrine of the trivṛtkaraṇa, which was later developed as the famous theory of Pañcīkaraṇa. Based on this Pañcīkaraṇa theory, we find in later Advaitic texts a detailed account of the world's creation. However, despite all these realistic accounts of the creation, a student of the Advaita Vedānta never misses the point that the real import of the text is not to give a description of the process of creation but to expound the identity and unity of Jīva with Brahman. Śāṅkara says that the empirical manifoldness of created world or its creation, etc., is not the real purport of the Vedānta.

From the beginning to the end, the Upaniṣadic texts only suggest that the texts related to the creation, etc., should be read-only in the context of principal texts propounding the existence of a non-dual eternal Brahman (*Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*-1.4.14). aṁkara repeats his position again and again. In his commentary of Brahmasūtra – 2/1/27 he further says that all the Upaniṣadic texts related to an account of the world's creation have their meanings in propounding the identity of Brahman and Jīva. These texts, giving an account of creation, do not mean what they say literally; their real meaning is to show the unity and identity of the self:

Na ceyam paramārthaviśayā sṛṣṭiśrutiḥ, avidyā kalpitanāma
rūpavyavahāragocaravāt, brahmātmabhāvapratipādanaparavacca ityetaḍapi naiva
vismartavyam. *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*-2.1.33

⁶ Here it should be reminded that Abhinavagupta does accept that the Ultimate ever remains beyond the creative process. He is the Anuttara. Śiva could not be reduced to 36 principles.

The same idea we find in Śaṅkara's commentary on *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* – 3/15, where Gauḍapāda says that the various Upaniṣadic accounts of creation by giving analogies of clay, iron, or fine-sparks, etc. are only meant to suggest the non-differential and non-dual nature of reality:

mṛllauha viṣphulingādyaiḥ sṛṣṭiryā coditā'nyathāi Upāyaḥ so'vatārāya nāsti bhedaḥ
kathaṅcanaḥ || -*Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* 3.15.

Thus we can see that the real teaching of Vedānta is not the Brahmapariṇāma-vāda but Brahmapratipattyarthatā-m-vāda. Real existence is only of cause and not of effects – effects are only fictitious or vācārambhaṇa. Now, if the real existence is only of cause and the so-called effect is false, the cause remains unchanged; all modifications are only the appearances and not real. The so-called transformation or modifications or creation of effects from the cause should be considered illusory. The tattva, the real, remains unchanged - tasmā dastyavikṛtaṁ Brahma. Consequently, if Brahman or Śiva is accepted as the cosmological ground of the world or as creator God, that is only an allegory or analogy. The aim is to establish its non-dual, non-differential reality and not establish God as the creator or give an account of the world's creation. Śaṅkara says that the Upaniṣads only suggest that the creation process should be understood as an indicator of non-dual Brahman. It is propounding the theses that water is the root of grains, the fire is the ground of water, and the being of Brahman is the ground of fire:

darśayati ca ṛṣṭyādīprapañcasya brahmapratipattyarthatām---annena somya
śuṅgenāpo mūlamanvicchādbhiḥ somya śuṅgena tejomūlamanviccha tejasā somya
śuṅgena sanmūlamanviccha iti --*Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*-1.4.14.

Śaṅkara summarizes that the real purport of the texts related to the account of creation is not to propound a theory of creation but to establish the existence of a non-dual eternal Brahman.

Thus, we see that the Brahman or Śiva is essentially a cosmic one. It is beyond time, space, and relations – be it causal or logical. The Ultimate is a non-determinate, eternal, and non-personal reality. Any theistic account of that reality fails to comprehend its nature. Moreover, this is the point where Śaṅkara's Advaita proves to be sounder than that of Kāśmīra Śaivism.

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